



VICTORIA UNIVERSITY OF
WELLINGTON
TE HERENGA WAKA

New Zealand Contemporary China Research Centre

KŌMARU KURA



2020 Annual Report

About the Centre

The New Zealand Contemporary China Research Centre is a national centre to promote knowledge and understanding of contemporary China through support for research, lectures, seminars, conferences, visitor exchanges and information sharing. It provides a forum for research on contemporary China and facilitates a network of China specialists and academics. The Centre strengthens ties between scholars and researchers in leading institutions in New Zealand and China. The China Centre is based at Victoria University of Wellington. In addition to Victoria University of Wellington it has seven University Members. These are: The University of Auckland, Auckland University of Technology, the University of Canterbury, the University of Otago, the University of Waikato, Lincoln University and Massey University.

2020 in review

2020 has been a challenging year of adjusting and rescheduling activities due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The Centre was pleased to appoint a new Senior Fellow, Geremie Barme (founding director of the Australian Centre on China in the World). The Centre has moved to online and hybrid seminars and talks, postponing in-person dialogues, visiting academics and planned public lectures. We have maintained China Capable Public Sector activities moving to online, hybrid and in-person (with some online speakers) offerings. One silver lining has been the opportunity to host international speakers for online talks and to have audience participation from across New Zealand, Australia and further afield. Hosting these talks has led us to consider again who our stakeholders are, what we offer compared to other China Centres internationally and how we better serve the needs of New Zealand academia and interested public. We have maintained a steady set of activities, focusing on research projects, events and government courses. Travel in 2021 is likely to remain limited and we will plan accordingly.

Activities of the Centre

New Zealand International Conference on Contemporary China

[The Chinese Economy: New Policies, Challenges and Directions \(17-20 November 2020\)](#)

This year in place of an international conference we organised three lectures on the Chinese economy. These garnered a good level of interest, stimulated good questions and helped strengthen our engagement with the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, The Brookings Institute and the University of International Business and Economics. Due to COVID restrictions, this event was held fully online via Zoom webinar over consecutive days. The three talks were:

- 'Dual Circulation: China's New Economic Policy Framework Amidst U.S.—China Tensions' by Xu Qiyuan, (Senior Fellow, Head of Economic Development Department, Deputy Director of the Research Centre of International Finance, Chinese Academy of Social Sciences).
- 'Challenges for the Chinese Economy in Light of the Global Recession and Trade War' by David Dollar, (Senior Fellow, John L. Thornton China Center at the Brookings Institution).
- 'Chinese Foreign Trade Policy by Zhuang Rui', (Professor, Deputy Dean of Institute of International Economy at University of International Business and Economics).

Public Lectures

1. Professor Martin King Whyte (John Zwaanstra Professor of International Studies and Sociology, Emeritus, Harvard University), 'Global Popular Anger Against Rising Inequality: Why is China an Exception?', Victoria University of Wellington, 3 March 2020.
2. We postponed the public lecture planned with Robert Ross (Fairbank Centre for Chinese Studies, Harvard University, Professor of Political Science, Boston College) due to COVID-19.
3. Professor Akio Takahara (University of Tokyo), 'Are the Belt and Road Initiative and the Free and Open Indo Pacific compatible?' with commentary from Natasha Hamilton-Hart (New Zealand Asia Institute, University of Auckland) and Damon Salesa (PVC Pacific, University of Auckland), co-hosted with the New Zealand Institute of International Affairs (25 November 2020). – online webinar.
4. The Director participated in public lectures and panel discussions hosted by the New Zealand Institute of International Affairs (on Hong Kong) and the Asia New Zealand Foundation (on Taiwan).

Global China Seminar Series

The Global China Seminar series is a regular seminar on an aspect of China Studies relevant to a New Zealand audience. This year we have had good turnout at all seminars with crowds ranging from 20 to 60 academics, policymakers and interested public.

- I. Dr Elaine Peng (recent PhD political science Victoria University of Wellington), *'Carsun Chang On a Chinese Republic of Federated Provinces: Semi-Presidentialism as a Novel Type of Democracy'*, Online Zoom Webinar (20 May 2020).
- II. Meng Foon (New Zealand Race Relations Commissioner), *'Give Nothing to Racism: A Conversation with Race Relations Commissioner Meng Foon'*, Online Zoom Webinar (16 June 2020).
- III. Dr Ruiping Ye (Senior Lecturer, School of Law, Victoria University of Wellington), *'China's Covid-19 Response: Of Powers and Punishments'*, Victoria University of Wellington and Online Zoom Webinar (16 July 2020).
- IV. David Mahon (Managing Director and Chief Investment Officer of Mahon China Investment Management Ltd), *'Reflections on Rewi: A Conversation with David Mahon'*, Victoria University of Wellington and Online Zoom Webinar (3 September 2020).
- V. Bill Hayton (Associate Fellow with the Asia-Pacific Programme at Chatham House) *'The Invention of the Chinese nation'*, Online Zoom Webinar (16 October 2020).

Activities Abroad

Dialogues with China Institutes of Contemporary International Relations and the annual symposium with the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences were postponed due to travel restrictions.

The Centre participated in a discussion of 'Goeconomics and technology' in Canberra in February, hosted by the Australian Centre on China in the World

Roundtables

1. 'Australia-China Relations' Roundtable with Allan Gyngell AO FAIIA, National President of the Australian Institute of International Affairs (February 2020).
2. Roundtable discussion on the COVID pandemic in China with Professor He Fan (Peking University – online) and Ambassador Wu Xi (in person) (26 March 2020).
3. Clare Fearnley, (New Zealand Ambassador to China), (16 December 2020).

The Centre was represented in a range of roundtables such as one hosted by Julian Gerwitz, Senior Fellow for China Studies at the Council on Foreign Relations and a hosted by the Guangdong University of Foreign Studies (on the Pacific).

Visiting Research Fellows

1. Emeritus Professor Martin King Whyte, John Zwaanstra Professor of International Studies and Sociology, Emeritus and Professor of Sociology at Harvard from 2000 to 2015. (March- April 2020 – sent home early as New Zealand closed its borders and went into lockdown). Marty had a full programme of talks in Wellington, Auckland (New Zealand Asia Institute; North Asia CAPE), Christchurch (cancelled) and Dunedin (cancelled) and completed a working paper for the centre.
2. Associate Professor Zhai Junliang, China University of Mining and Technology (September 2019 to September 2020 – stayed on through lockdown). Conducted research on healthcare reform in New Zealand and China

Research Papers

The Centre published two research papers:

['China's Economic Development History and Xi Jinping's "China Dream:" An Overview with Personal Reflections'](#) by Martin K. Whyte.

In this report Martin K. Whyte reflects on economic development in China over his career and analyses the current developmental challenges China faces. This article was later published by the *Chinese Sociological Review* with reference to Professor Whyte's visiting fellowship in New Zealand.

['Climate Target Setting in China's 14th Five-Year Plan'](#) by Pan Jiahua.

This article outlines China's target-based approach, its role in climate governance, and its progress in implementing the nationally determined contributions (NDCs) under the Paris Agreement. It assesses China's progress toward these long-term goals as well as the challenges and opportunities for China today and into the future. The article was delivered at a conference organized by the New Zealand Contemporary China Research Centre in Wellington in November 2019.

The Centre currently has the following publications in progress:

- 'China's Economic Decoupling Debate' by Caleb Hoyle and Jason Young – a review of Chinese language debates on US-China decoupling.
- 'China's New Tourists' edited by Jason Young and Peter Harris (conference proceedings) to be published by the China Centre.
- 'China's Public Health Reform' by Zhai Junliang, to be published as a China Working Paper.

Media Engagement and Opinion Pieces

Media attention on China issues has remained high in 2020 both locally and internationally and the Centre has featured prominently on radio, tv, newspapers and news sites across a range of China issues. It has been pleasing to see more voices speaking in the New Zealand and international media on New Zealand related China issues. I encourage the Associate Directors to promote the voices of China scholars at their institutions. The Centre will continue to recommend various scholars to media in order to continue to thicken the debate on China in New Zealand.

The Centre has also been involved in discussions and events with officials from New Zealand, Australia, China, Japan, Korea, Southeast Asia, the Netherlands, the United Kingdom, Canada and the United States. The Director has published the occasional opinion piece through Newsroom, the Asia Media Centre and the East Asia Forum.

China Capable Public Sector

The Centre has continued its activities with government through the China Capable Public Sector (CCPS) programme. This year the Centre conducted 10 in-person, online and hybrid knowledge transfer events and continued the successful Masterclass programme with CCPS. The Masterclass is an intensive five-day course on China designed and taught by the China Centre. This year the Centre has put on three well-attended classes in June, September and November. The Centre also organised and facilitated a cross-agency government discussions as well as a senior leaders forum.

Research Projects

The Centre is considering a research report on changes in China's higher education sector and implications for collaboration and partnership with New Zealand institutions. The Centre is working on a project annotating a series of People's Daily articles on the US-China trade war. The Centre is working with a group of academics across the country on a volume of reflections on New Zealand engagement with China to mark the 50th anniversary of diplomatic relations (2022).

The Centre continues to organise knowledge transfer events, masterclasses and other forums in hybrid forms. The Centre is working on a series of short online courses on China for public sector officials. This will involve extensive collaboration with New Zealand academics. It is an excellent opportunity to showcase to the New Zealand public sector the range of China expertise in New Zealand.

A View to the Future

International travel is likely to remain severely curtailed in 2021. The possibility of organising in-person international meetings is low. Therefore, the Centre aims to maintain a focus on research projects, publications as well as targeted online/hybrid seminars and lectures to maintain visibility and contribute to China debates and discussions in New Zealand and abroad. 2020 has shown that it remains critically important to maintain a focus on independent New Zealand research on China.



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